10: d'Orleans--313 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 202, 782, 793

"The signal for the commencement of the principal acts of worship is a big bell placed upon the summit of the hill, and it is also used as an alarm bell in the event of fire, in which case it is rung in quite a different way.

The bonzes give instruction to their pupils, preside over certain festivals and preach to the people: they read passages from the sacred books, inculcate charity, and above all impress upon their congregations the importance of making many presents to the pagoda so as to be well pleasing to heaven and to deserve everlasting life.

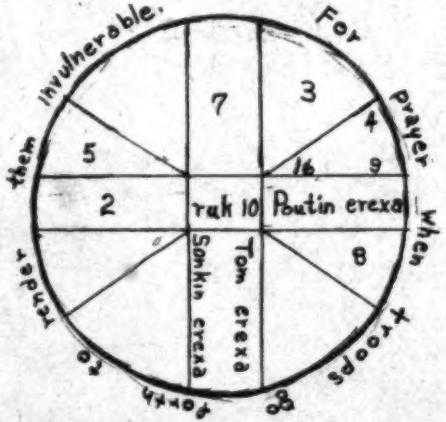
In a small chapel, in front of each pagoda, a bronze bell rings every afternoon at four o'clock, while on Sundays and fête days it rings at 1 A. M. The bonzes, be it added, are supposed to make only two meals a day, in the early morning and at noon, but their pupils are not expected to conform to this rule."

10: d'Orleans--338 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 363, 775, 782

[LSS: in Luang Prabang] "Between the palace and the river bank a broad street runs parallel to the market, and at frequent intervals are jars containing water, placed there by the inhabitants, who believe that in so doing they are making sure of a reward hereafter."

10: d'Orleans--340-343 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos-1-2
116, 173, 346, 777, 782

"Behind the altar [LSS: of the pagoda of Ouate Uisoune in Luang Prabang] is a semi-circular black stone upon a wooden pedestal and covered with Laotian inscriptions. Upon one side of this stone, it is related how the king of Muong Hay (near Muong Yan), having come for a festival with the king of Luang Prabang, left in the pagoda images of Buddha and books made of palm branches about 1198. The date is 1198 after Tiaoman Ta, who is supposed to have lived sixty-six centuries ago, so that it is one difficult to verify. Upon the reverse is a cabalistic sign which, worn by a soldier on the [pages 341 and 342 contain illustration] [343] breast, renders him invulnerable. This sign is as follows:-



10: d'Orleans--340-343 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos-2
116, 173, 346, 777, 782

The figures are in Laotian.
Ruk is an invocation to the gods.
Poutin erexa means (Pra god) pout, protect me.
Tom (in) erexa means (Teonda god) protect me.
Sonkin erexa means, bonzes protect me.
In this, as in the other temples are to be found the conduit for the holy water, the pulpit, the sunshades, the divinities which lay hands on the faithful, the adorned gods and the Buddhas with clasped hands (Pra Hopokoute), while in the adjoining pagoda of more recent construction are twenty rows of small gilt Buddhas placed close beside one another against the wall."

10: d'Orleans--345 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos

247, 782

[LSS:During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"Flowers, including piles of gardenias picked in the gardens, four varieties of orchid and red and white flowers from different trees, are also bought in large quantities for the decoration of the pagodas..."

10: d'Orleans--346 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527, 782, 796, 821

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.] "April 12th
As we cross the stream, we notice all along the banks tiny rafts conveying presents, notably rice, and these are offerings made by the boatmen in order that they may take plenty of fish, and be favoured by the weather while out with their boats.

In the town the statues are still out in the open, or rather they are placed under a small scaffolding, the sacred water conduit pouring out its contents drop by drop through the dragon's mouth in which it terminates at one end, while the other end is in the pagoda and is being fed by the priests, long tapers with strips of paper bearing the donor's name are burning before the altar."

10: d'Orleans--352-353 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 535, 644, 782

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"The 15th [LSS: of April] is a more interesting day for us, as the king is to make a progress through the streets, the event being announced early in the morning by two of the four guns which the Siamese have mounted here.

When we arrive at the pagoda of Ouate Uisonne, we find that the crowd is already very great, and that women are bringing to the pagoda flowers and meats placed in large dishes. From the street to the entrance of the temple the path is covered with bamboo mats; the peristyle is draped with yellow [353] silk, beneath which the king is seated and is taking tea, while the bonzes are reciting prayers inside. The same dances described above are again performed, with the addition this time of a third figure, viz., that of a dragon with a golden head and jaws like a crocodile, the body being formed of material which has a blue stripe down the middle of the back. There are two men inside, and the monster, which goes through the most extraordinary contortions, is called Tsinng (the lion)."

10: d'Orleans--369 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 226, 782

"After leaving Muong Liep we camp at the right of the river near a sand-bank covered with the remains of former encampments. A hundred paces off is a large pond some 150 feet broad and of considerable length. It owes its name to its green waters nong kiou (green pond). In the month of February people come from all directions, and even from Luang Prabang, to camp on its edge and to fish. Many big fish are caught here, but now, we are told, they are in a cavern which extends under the sand-bank. I do not know how true this may be, but it is certain that in walking on the sand and striking it, a hollow sound is heard. Before fishing two bullocks are sacrificed to the dragon of the lake, and tchoum-tchoum is drunk.

When we talk of fishing ourselves with dynamite our boatmen dissuade us: 'they cannot dive because of the dragon.' "

25: Brodrick--96-97 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians-1-3
116, 776, 769, 782, 823

"Although the people of the Laos are happy-go-lucky and carefree, and their mild and mitigated Little Vehicle Buddhism sits lightly upon them, the spirits are ever-present. Still, to this day, in a country where men are naturally, it seems, hospitable and open-handed, no stranger will be invited until the spirits have given their permission sought by offerings to them of five candles of pure beeswax, five frangipani flowers, five incense-sticks and a bottle of rice-alcohol.

All that happens to hurt man is the work of spirits. For 'primitive' men--and the Laotians, despite their real if rustic civilization, maintain many of the reactions and fundamental beliefs of 'primitives' --disaster, and the greatest of all disasters, death, is not 'normal' or 'natural.' In the Land of the Laos, the p'hi-lok or manes of the ancestors are jealous beings, easy to take offence and these p'hi or spirits and the ho or demons must receive propitiatory sacrifices. There is a similar underlying fear and faith in Cambodia but they are better hid. But in the Laos it may be said that all believe that ghosts come back at night in animal shape to plague the living. In animal shape. The archaic ideas which we tend to label rather too easily as 'totemistic' are all vaguely interwined with feelings rather than definable dogmas, feelings of some close relation between man and other animals.

With the p'hi-lok, who sow terror, and the p'hi phob, or evil spirits, are the numberless demons of the woods and the guardian genii of the wild. The forests are fearsome

places and best avoided. The old travellers told a terrible tale of the Forest of the King of [97] Fire, the Dong-Phaja-Fai, through which you had to climb to reach Korat, (1) and

1. Korat, of course, is in modern Siam, but it is in Laotian land. Mgr. Pellegoix's entertaining Description du Royaume de Siam was published in 1854.

the journey took five whole days. The awful name, alone, of this dread jungle spread terror, and countless wayfarers never came through the deep shades, since as Pellegoix relates, in an effort, doubtless, to rationalize the legends, here and there in this jungle, the earth contains 'mineral arsenic' whose dust the passer-by breathes and with it death.

If the Laotian goes into the jungle, ill may befall him, and surely will if he there spends the night. He may disappear for ever or he may be transported to an enchanted land wherein, for long years he may chase phantoms and illusions and if he manages, at last, to escape from this bewitched realm, when he reaches his hut he will not be recognized by his relations who, having mourned him as dead, have long ceased to think of him and will be most embarrassed and annoyed at his reappearance--or, if he shuns such adventures, he will emerge from the great woods as a sick man, the demons have struck him with malignant fever, dragging him to the grave in a few short days.

Picanon told a curious tale of what he experienced, years ago, when he was living on Khone island, right in the south near the Khong cataracts and the Cambodian frontier. After a day of torrential showers and violent storms, in the evening as he was finishing his dinner in his house, two young women ran in upon him and threw themselves trembling at his feet imploring him for aid and for protection. Thinking that some brigand was after the women, Picanon reached for his gun and made to go out on to the veranda, but the girls sobbed to him not to venture forth alone for a p'hi had called to them and cursed them at the very moment they were passing the house. They tottered with him out of the windows and pointed to a bushy mango-tree in a rice-field nearby. On the tree was a bird, luminiferous in the moonlight. It flew screeching away as Picanon fired a charge of shot in its direction, and the women were reassured."

25: Brodrick--98-99 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 779, 782, 792, 872

"...the framework of Little Vehicle Buddhism looks much the same as in the land of the Khmers. There are the saffron-robes, but the bonzes are sturdier and less composed than in Cambodia. When the monks do their rounds with their begging-bowls, the holy men do not hesitate to look women in the face, to speak with them and even to touch their hands. The Laotian bonzes are not the less Laotian for being bonzes, and by no means all of them observe strictly the precepts of their Order. In fact, some of them are [99] a little loose of conduct. Again, the Buddhist hierarchy in the Laos is almost more sacerdotal than monastic, and, in the public estimation, the bonze is more or less of a priest, that is, a man performing efficacious and quasi-magical ceremonies. There are temple-schools, as in Cambodia, Siam and Burma. In these schools the male population learns to read and write in the complicated Laotian script that is rather derived from Siamese than from Cambodian. The same moral obligations are supposed to constrain the monks. The offerings at the pagoda services are just fragrant frangipani flowers, candles and incense. There is no such divergence from Little Vehicle practice as would make of Laotian Buddhism a new religion such as is the Lamaism of Tibet. But everything is a little distorted, vague, misty, if we will. The alien religion is subjected to a strong push from beneath and is transmuted by an all-pervading atmosphere of nonchalance and good humour."

25: Brodrick--100 [2] S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 535, 764, 782

"...the funerals in the Laos are gay ceremonies. When a man dies his body is covered in perfume-soaked sawdust piled into a hardwood coffin--the Laos is a land of fine, hard-grained woods--and the whole is placed upon a catafalque near the house. The bier is watched day and night by youths and maidens who sing songs, improvise poems, crack jokes, make love, and play musical instruments, while, from time to time, but not too often, the Buddhist monks come and read sutras of the Good Law. Cremation is not so strictly observed as in Cambodia, but most bodies are burned, at least in the towns and larger villages. After the incineration comes the Feast of the Appeasement of the Spirits. A covered altar is set up near the dead man's house, and on the altar are offerings to the manes or ghosts, offerings of frangipani flowers, of rice, of betel, of alcohol and of swords. And all night long, the women dance archaic-sounding , rhythmic measures to the tunes strummed out by an orchestra."

68: Mouhot--154 [2] N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 782, 793

"[HD: In the villages of southern Luang Prabang province] The Laotian priests are continually praying in their pagodas; they make a frightful noise, chanting from morning to night. Assuredly they ought to go direct to Paradise."

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

403 electricians hugged each other, and, enchanted by the din, the
527 audience began to drift away from the theatre and make for the dancing floor.

527 The second attraction in order of popularity was a love-court. A
584 quadrangular arrangement of tables had been formed, covered by a
● 782 thatched roof raised on posts decorated with woven bamboo
793 representations of animals, weapons and phallic emblems. Seated round the tables in the interior of the square were the girls, and their suitors sat facing them. Between the couples had been placed offerings of food, brought by the girls. Originally a tribute to some ancient, forgotten fertility god, a primeval Thai Venus, the offerings would be given, next day, to the bonzes. All through the night the bantering of witticisms, the singing and the exchange of improvised verse would go on, accompanied by the accordion-like
[584] wheezings of the Kène, the Stone Age gourd pipes of Laos. Sometimes through a happy fault in the circuit the splutter and bellow of the loud-speakers would suddenly lapse, and you heard the beehive dronings of the communal love-making, the kènes, and the voice of the presiding bonze, preaching continually in an archaic, incomprehensible language from the wicker cage into which he had been fastened. The cage symbolized the protection of his religion from these earthly distractions. As soon as inspiration failed he would be relieved by the next on the rota of preachers, waiting now to take his place.

584 Love-courts are the accepted preliminary to the consummation of
[533] affairs of the heart, which — despite European conviction that
576 romantic love is a Western invention — are accompanied in Laos by much versifying and mild, self-imposed frustrations. When, for instance, a well-known beauty is wooed by a number of suitors, a serenading match may be arranged on the veranda of her house to permit her to test under competitive conditions the poetic and musical capabilities of each of them. Complete pre-marital freedom
[836] is recognized, but much outward reserve is maintained. There is a time and place for everything. It is incorrect, for example, to

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
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the greatest artistic interest. I asked the headman if it would be possible to take any, as the bonze was crumpling and smashing them vigorously with his broom. But the chief shook his head regretfully. Buddhism had degenerated in these remote provinces and was swamped with re-emergent spirit cults. These objects had been dedicated to the *phi*[*] and would have to be burnt in a ritual fire. The *phi* would also receive the burnt essence, I noticed, of a large, very obscene, and no doubt magically valuable picture.

At about this time when the bonze was treading underfoot the village's artistic output of several months, a party of Issarak or Viet-Minh, timing their action to coincide with the convoy's arrival at Moung Kassy, had set fire to the forest just south of the post. A steady breeze was blowing from that quarter, and the fire, started over a width of about a mile and fanning out as it advanced, moved slowly towards the fort.

Coming up over the river bank it took us some time to realize what was happening. There was a haze; but then there was always a haze in Laos, although by this time of day it should have been clearing and not thickening. And then we heard the crackling, punctuated with the sharp pops, which might have been distant rifle fire, but which were the explosions of thick stems of bamboo. Looking up then we saw the curtain of smoke hanging over Muong Kassy, white at the top, and black at its base and streaked occasionally by lance-points of flame, which were still two miles away.

We ran to where the car was parked, started it and tried to drive down the road towards the fire. Dupont was as pleased with it as July 14th. In about fifty yards we got tangled up with the convoy and had to leave the car on the side of the road and run on. The fire was advancing on a ragged front and was as irresistible as a volcano. Black smoke was being blown before it so that at first the flames were out of sight; but when they came through they were two hundred feet high — twice the height of the tallest tree. It went forward in zigzagging rushes; eating its way quickly through the bamboo

[*] [i.e., spirits. — Analyst]

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

000 eventually to the Buddhas to solicit their curative powers; and if so what we should learn from it about the prevalence of disease among Europeans.

217 532 771 The museum of Vientiane, which I visited in the hope of learning something of the living art of the country, has also little more to show than a collection of Buddhas. There is a tranquillity, a lack of compulsion in the Hinayanist Buddhism of Cambodia and Laos — so different from the neurotic deformation practised by the later Khmer kings — which is not propitious to the development of religious art. There was no violence or drama in the life of Buddha comparable to that of Christ, and the Indian Epics have been eschewed in Laos as improperly secular. It has been enough to carve Buddhas, and more Buddhas *ad infinitum*, seeking perhaps to multiply in this way the magic virtues which each image contains. The curator takes you round, explaining the characteristic postures — there are seven or eight — all of which can be appreciated in five minutes. After that there are minute differences of physique and physiognomy to be noted that reflect the influences of India, of Java, of Thibet or of Ceylon. That is all.

177 532 782 By the time the museums turn to the art of the people, the grotesque animals in bamboo, the carved movable figures which are obscene to European eyes — all of which become a pagan burnt-offering at the end of each *boun*[1] — it will be too late. The microphone is an infallible sign of what is to come. Nothing of this kind will survive the era of materialism, under whatever form it arrives.

253 825 These are the sights of Vientiane, but in addition there is a spectacle which is popular with Europeans, who, remote, isolated, and living under difficulties, tend to shut themselves up within the protective social rituals of people in exile.

This spectacle is the slaughterhouse at work. I do not know whether or not it is illegal in Laotian law to kill animals, but certainly it is thought shameful, and the killing for Europeans is done at the dead of night on the outskirts of the town. The

[1] [Laotian religious festival. -- Analyst] 254

A DRAGON APPARENT

000 There was a recognized place about a mile up the river, which was free from weed and rock, and once again, because the water was deep and swiftly running, it was very cold and refreshing. We had
515 been swimming round for an hour or so when we noticed a number of Laotian girls hanging about. They were not watching us, but sauntering backwards and forwards in twos and threes, chatting to each other. By the time there were twelve of them, Dupont, keeping well in the water called to them and asked if we were disturbing them in any way. One of the girls came to the edge of the bank, bowed, and looking down at her feet said that it was their usual bathing time, but that there was no hurry, of course. Dupont asked the girls if they would retire for a moment, and they walked a short distance away and stood in a preoccupied circle while we got out of the water. We then dressed quickly and walked on down the path leading to their village. After about a hundred yards we looked back. All the girls, quite naked, were in the water. At that moment two bonzes were strolling slowly along the bank past them; but the girls paid no attention. The bonzes were wrapped in the mantle of holy invisibility.

622 When we reached the village, Dupont asked punctiliously for
304 the headman, making the excuse that he wanted to visit the pagoda. It was quite evident that this headman was in the good graces of the garrison, and probably supplied them with labour. He was very dignified and had a fine house, with European furniture. Although barefooted, he wore a French suit. On the suggestions of the soldier from the camp he took down his trousers and showed us his legs, which from ankles to thighs were tattooed, in the local manner, so
796 closely that he seemed to be wearing stockings. The annual *boun* 1/
782 had just been celebrated at the local pagoda and a bonze was in the
532 act of sweeping into a heap the votive offerings with which the floor
285 of the courtyard was littered. There was a great collection of elephants, buffaloes, peacocks and tigers, all woven in basket-work. The kind of thing that Picasso produces when he is not painting, but perhaps rather better. They seemed to me to be of

1/ [i.e., religious festival.--Analyst]

565 The common people, kind and carefree in character, roamed
175* over the country in all directions as easy-going masters, leaving
/462/ household tasks to the women and the work of the fields to dependents of an inferior race or to slaves. They were excellent boatmen and traders rather than farmers, so that they liked to perform the function of peddlers and served as a link between the multiple /55/ varieties of mankind which inhabited Lan-Xang.

567 Slavery existed--slaves could be obtained through capture, as
175* the result of debt or through trade--and brought high profits to those
563 who engaged in this traffic. In the region of Muong-Swa there was also a kind of serfdom which was applied to certain Kha tribes placed under the patronage of the king, the princes or the chief representatives of the nobility.

565 But if we consider the gentle and happy temperament of this
175* people whose good humor made up for everything, we are justified in believing that the relations between the various social levels must have been free of any harshness.

191 They spoke a dialect derived from the language which was imported into the basin of the Ménam by Rama Khamheng at the end of the thirteenth century and which was itself derived from the
771 graphs of India (1). They practiced orthodox Buddhism together
793
554

1. Cf. Mission Pavie, op. cit. /Études diverses, Vol. II, "Recherches sur l'Histoire du Cambodge du Laos et du Siam"/ Inscription of Sukhothaï translated by Father Schmitt, p. 192: "It was in (1287 A. D.) that the king Rama-Khameng summoned a teacher who created Thaï writing."

with the cult of the "Phi" or Genii which represented for them the beneficent or maleficent forces of Nature. The bonzes were of comparatively pure morals amidst these peoples for whom enjoyment and pleasure were, when /56/ all is considered, the true gods. Although they were fairly ignorant and recited their prayers in Pali
/782/ without understanding them, they did not lack a certain air of nobility. They also enjoyed a high regard and had as much favor as they could desire. The bonzeries[1] which were built near the pagodas were at once places of inviolable asylum, schools frequented by all the children of the village, and workshops where trades could be learned.

/[1] Buddhist Monasteries--Analyst./

779 thoughts of your previous life have been good. Thanks to these efforts you will pass successively, in your various incarnations, from the state of man to the state of holy man, then to that of saint and finally to that of Buddha or perfection, from which you will fall back into the mute and calm abyss, the void and eternal rest. Besides the constant effort of the will to raise itself, the good deeds which you accomplish will tend to the same purpose, whether they be deeds of action, of thought, of word or of intention.

"Anyone who, on the other hand, abandons himself to evil actions and makes no effort to raise himself gradually moves away from the state dreamed by Buddha, and his successive reincarnations occur in the opposite direction, descending into the bodies of animals which may be more or less maleficent and despicable.

"The above, however, are speculations to which the Laotian intelligence cannot rise. The Buddhist religion as practiced in Laos demands only a few outer signs of deference towards bonzes and holy places.

771 "Besides Buddhism, the Laotians have retained, or transformed
776 into a cult, certain Spirits or Genii whom they call Phis, the in-
782 numerable deities of the Brahminic Pantheon by which Buddhism was accompanied when it was imported into Laos and which have been reduced to a lesser stature.

"All the forces of nature, all that is capable of bringing disorder into life and every movement or phenomenon which the Laotian cannot explain is personified by a particular Genie or Spirit.

"The cult of these Phis may be summed up as follows: it is an interested exchange of gifts or sacrifices by men, in return for the goodwill, neutrality or help of the Phis. Oftentimes, when the Phi is not greatly dreaded, a bargain will be made with him which will be repaid after he has performed his part of the bargain. The cult of the Phis has a widespread following, and they have their lay priests who bear the title of guardians of the Genii.

771 "In addition to the cult of the Phis, which is nothing more nor
821 less than a form of polytheism, the Laotians are subject to rather numerous superstitions.

"Thus if an eclipse of the moon occurs Laotians imagine that a tiger is trying to devour it, and everyone at once begins to take turns banging on gongs, firing shots and using every means to make as much noise as possible so as to frighten off the aforesaid tiger and prevent it from swallowing the nocturnal star.

776 lay priests preside. These lay priests, or rather these servants of the
793 Spirits, correspond to the Guardians of the Genii in the Buddhist
755 religion. Usually they exercise their ministry only when one of their countrymen falls sick or dies.

"In case of a serious illness the servant of the Spirits goes to the sick person's house, goes to his side and recites a few prayers. Then he takes a bowl of uncooked rice on which he stands an egg with the smallest end upwards. With his right hand the officiant drops a certain number of grains of rice on the point of the egg, performing this operation three times in all. If the same number of grains of rice remain on the point of the egg each time, this means that a "Spirit" has entered the sick person's body.

787 "By means of similar maneuvers, the Spirit is then questioned to find out what he wants to eat. Depending on the answer, a buffalo, an ox or a pig may be killed. The designated animal is slaughtered and then scorched without being skinned so as to destroy the hairs which cover it. The entrails are taken out and carefully washed [154] in running water, then replaced in the animal's body. The victim is taken to the altar of the Spirits, which is located outside the village, and placed with its head towards the altar. Then prayers are said asking the Spirit to cure the sick person. When the ceremony is over the animal is taken back to the village, where it is cut into pieces and divided among all the inhabitants. The invalid rarely gets well.

"There are also sorcerers and witches among the Thais, who are consulted in circumstances of lesser importance.

[775] "The Thais believe in metempsychosis, although their ideas on the subject are not very clear" (1).

(1) Le Laos français, op. cit. [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

771 Religion of the Khas. Among the Khas, even those who practice
•782 Buddhism, the only existing religion is a religion of "Phis" which is
776 similar to the Thai belief in "Spirits, Genii and Demons." The outer manifestations of this cult consist of offerings of rice, flowers and fruit, but never include sacrifices of animals. Small shelters which affect the form of an ordinary house are built at the entrance to villages to receive propitiatory offerings destined for the "Phi".

the "Phi."

It is said that each of us has his good and his evil genie which are engaged in a constant struggle, and that we are good or evil according as the one or the other gains the upper hand. This is a kind of symbolism of good and evil, but here the controlling and guiding conscience is replaced by the influences of the moment, the occasion, the circumstances and the milieu.

Each house also has its own "genie", reminiscent of the Roman Lares, to which sacrifices and offerings are made on every possible occasion.

The evil "Phis" are more dreaded and receive a great many more offerings than the good "Phis," with whom no trouble need be taken.

In each village there is a sorcerer to explain the actions of the "Phis" and teach the way to gain their favor. Although consultations with them are not free of charge these sorcerers, who are called Mo-hou-ha, Mo-Phi or Phi-pop depending on the province, are just as [155] [Illustration] [156] [Blank page] [157] highly regarded as the "Guardians of the Genii" of the Buddhist religion and, like them, are exempt from servitude and taxes.

In times of epidemic all responsibility is attributed to the evil "Phis", and in order to make them take flight the men of the villages beat on the roofs of their houses with long bamboo poles until such time as the "Phis" are supposed to have disappeared.

The Khas have retained a belief in metempsychosis which is tinged with certain rather vague superstitions bearing on a future life and some kind of resurrection. But this second existence is not everyone's privilege, and will exist only insofar as one's life has been a good one.

They also believe in the existence of a place of torment where perjurers, murderers, etc. will remain for all eternity. To be sure, they believe in a general way that a new life will begin and that it will be a reward or a punishment for the individual's deeds in his last incarnation. Thus a brave and good man will return as a happy and respected chieftain. Others will be entitled only to an animal existence, the importance of which in the scale of being will be like a personification of their faults and merits. One odd fact is that women always want to return in the guise of a man.

Religion of the Lus. The religion practiced by the Lus is a form of Buddhism which has been mitigated by certain local customs

346 Pagodas are always built on ground which has been perfectly leveled, is quite extensive and is surrounded by a wooden palisade or brick wall of elbow height.

[485] Within the pagoda enclosures there are bonzeries and dependent structures to serve as quarters for the bonzes, schools for their pupils and hostelries for travelers.

735 The construction and upkeep of pagodas are entirely dependent on the generous liberality of the faithful. Thus these edifices can be used
346 as a criterion for discovering both the state of prosperity of a region and the religious faith of its inhabitants.

[778] As used to be the case for our churches, Laotian pagodas and even their enclosures are, according to the customs of the land, sanctuaries which confer immunity against legal prosecution for certain crimes and misdemeanors.

[527] It is also in the enclosure and sometimes under the cloisters and verandas of the pagodas that the inhabitants gather on the legal holidays, and also private holidays, which are known as "Ngans".

844 Childbirth. Dr. Estrade describes the delivery of a woman of southern Laos as follows. The preliminaries, the operation itself and post-delivery procedure are the same, with only slight differences in detail, in northern Laos, and we may therefore quote Dr. Estrade's description as applicable to all of Laos in general.

"Childbirth never takes place in the house inhabited by the pregnant woman or her direct relatives, but always in the home of a neighbor or distant relative who gives hospitality to the patient until she is up and about again. The duration of pregnancy is counted in moons, as in all calculations of time, the moon being the essential element for the Laotian in the measurement of time and the occurrenc
777 of a great many phenomena. When a woman reaches the last moon of her pregnancy she takes certain precautions all tending to delay
821 delivery until the first phase of the new moon, since births during the last phases are signs of misfortune [189] such as the death of the child, deformity, etc. These prejudices have such force that parents are
[782] careless in caring for any child born during the last phases of the moon and in such a case all of their effort goes into prayers, offerings to the bonzes and the making of votive offerings (1)

(1) This assertion should not, however, be taken too literally or in any general sense. This is a prejudice which is kept up by the bonzes in their own self-interest, and is easy to see through. (Author's note.)

527 836 584 From time to time a girl will get up and leave the celebration. She is soon followed by a young man, and both disappear into the shadows, escorted for form's sake by a little boy or girl. This is the beginning of a liaison and will doubtless end in marriage, unless the young gallant is in too much of a hurry, clumsy or flighty and finds himself faced with paying one of the special fines if he compromises the girl and refuses to make up for it.

• 782 527 531 Offerings to the pagodas. There are other "Ngans" which have a half profane and half religious purpose. That is to say, they are established either to thank heaven for a lucky event or to solicit its clemency. They may occur, for example, either to celebrate a return to health after a long illness, or the success of a trading season or hunting or fishing expedition, or to call down blessings from on high on a trip which is being made or planned, etc. These types of "Ngans" then involve offerings to the pagodas and to the bonzes, offerings which bear the name of "Tone-Pheung" (literally, wax cut in pieces). They are so named because of the wax imitation flowers which decorate [222] a kind of pyramid or small pagoda supporting them, called "Pha-Sate" (in French, Faithful to God).

These little edifices are built and decorated by the friends or guests with a rapidity, a taste and an elegance which would be astounding if we did not know the degree to which artistic feeling is innate in the Laotian, and if we were not aware of the prodigious skill with which he is endowed.

Built on a bamboo framework covered with pieces of banana wood, carved with festoons and ornamental moldings, and arranged in tiers of roofs, in minarets and in columns, these "Pha-Sate," which are always between one and two meters in height, seem to be made of ivory and affect an extraordinary variety of forms each of which is more graceful than the last and which seem to be inspired by the architecture of the pagodas of India, Cambodia and Burma.

It will not be in vain to note that the only purpose of these ephemeral edicules, which will keep their new look for only a short while, is merely to present the wax offering in a less banal and more artistic manner than if it had been given in the form of thick, heavy, massive blocks.

The "Pha-Sate" are mounted on stretchers which are carried by men. Besides their wax flowers, they are decorated with natural

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flowers, pompoms and multicolored cotton streamers. Thick wax candles are stuck to the uprights, into which coins, gold nuggets, gold leaf and precious stones are sunk.

The wax is destined for worship purposes and the other offerings will be used for the upkeep of pagodas or for ornamenting sacred statues. The bonzes are not forgotten, for on the platform of the "Pha-Sate," either between the uprights or in special baskets ad hoc, there are articles of clothing, bedclothes, kettles, talaps, betel accessories, etc.

The day preceding the delivery of the "Tone-Pheung" to the pagoda is spent in making all kinds of preparations--cooking food, making betel quids, cigarettes, cakes and other necessary items [223] for the morrow's celebration. In the evening there is a kind of rehearsal for the "Ngan" in which the singers and musicians practice until an extremely late hour while the mothers and married women continue to work in the presence of the young men and girls talking merrily.

On the morning of the day when the "Tone-Pheung" is to be presented to the pagoda the bonzes are invited to a copious feast which continues long after their departure among relatives, friends and neighbors. The bonzes come back in the afternoon to bless the "Tone-Pheung" and to say certain prayers. Then, towards five in the afternoon, the procession forms and five or six bearers, depending on the weight, take the stretcher supporting the offering and raise it to their shoulders. The men follow first after the procession, and then the women, and the latter carry lighted wax candles in their hands. Musicians bring up the rear, and the whole crowd moves toward the pagoda by the longest route. There the "Pha-Sate" or the "Tone-Pheung" is taken around the enclosure three times and finally put down at the entrance to the pagoda. Those present place their candles in a special holder at the foot of the great statue of Buddha, and then withdraw while the bonzes recite prayers in the presence of whoever is making the offering and his relatives.

The guests then return to the home of their host, where the celebration goes on all night and sometimes even lasts into the following day.

The bonzes remove the wax from the "Pha-Sate" and use it to make candles for worship purposes. The flowers are placed at the feet of Buddha, and the coins and precious stones are put aside.

527 Those desirous of obtaining special graces give similar celebrations
782 which last several days and several nights, and the offerings are more beautiful and more varied. It is generally on occasions of this sort that assumptions of the habit by bonzes and their pupils are particularly likely to occur.

Being present at these ceremonies confers certain indulgences, and that is why they are so punctually followed and why all those who take part try [224] to help in celebrating them by offerings of all sorts.

[196] On the spot where the celebration is to be held, a sort of pulpit is constructed beforehand where the bonzes stand as they come up by turns to read passages chosen for the occasion from the sacred books. They never allow themselves to be disturbed by the surrounding noise, but stand as if transfixed in the middle of the songs and shouts.

It is readily understandable that this should be an agreeable way to procure one's salvation, but since it is very costly it is not within everyone's means. Fortunately, there are ways of compromising with [565] heaven which enable even the poorest to associate themselves in these great celebrations, in accordance with their resources, by means of even very modest offerings and to benefit therefrom both spiritually and materially.

There is no doubt but that a belief in the efficacy of plenary and partial indulgences enters into their consideration, but it is equally reasonable to suppose that the attraction of the profane pleasures which one enjoys in the course of these gatherings is not the least of the motivating causes which lead the Laotian people to frequent them so zealously.

[71] Pirogue races. We have seen that pirogue races and regattas took place during some of the legal holidays, and a few words of explanation on this matter are given below.

526 This custom must have been introduced by the Malays and then
501 handed down from the Kmers to the Laotians, following an ascending direction from south to north.

The pirogues used in the "Souang-Hua" (1) regattas are specially

(1) Literally, pirogues which run.

built and exclusively reserved for this use. Sometimes as much as twenty-five meters in length, they are hewn out of specially chosen wood and have most elegant delicate and elongated lines. Their extremities are armed with what appear to be slender gilded horns. The exterior is lacquered black with gold ornamentation and the

586 the Laotians." (Le Laos français.) [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

764 Deaths. Funerals. Everything takes place among the Thais
769 as among the Laotians. The poor are buried, while well-to-do people are cremated in great pomp. Celebrations take place at which animals are sacrificed, there is a great deal to eat and quantities of rice brandy and rice beer are consumed. But here there is ancestor worship, and so the altar of the "Phis" of the house and the body itself receive offerings as long as the funeral feasts last.

After cremation, which, as in India, is practiced on a raised pyre at the bottom of a pit dug in the ground, the ashes and burnt bones are sealed in a jar with a few silver coins placed there to pay for the dead person's food during his wanderings through "space."

The jar is buried on the site of the pyre. Then [237] [Illustration] [238] [Blank page] [239] the mattresses, bolster and pillow of the deceased are placed on top, as well as food and a drinking vase full of water. All of his clothes are fastened to poles planted fan-wise on one side of the tomb. Sometimes a fence closes off the site of the tomb.

In some regions the jar containing the remains and ashes of the deceased is buried in a hidden place in the mountains, known only to the dead person's closest relatives.

This procedure, which is not a ritual one, is doubtless intended to place the mortal remains beyond the reach of any profaners of sepulchres who might be attracted by the temptation of the few coins mixed with the ashes.

Finally, a little house is often built over the tomb which is supposed to represent the dwelling place of the deceased.

527 Games, Celebrations, Festivals. Like their Laotian brothers, the Thais are great lovers of celebrations. The chief holiday, one which is celebrated in May or June every year and during which all work ceases for four days, is that of the dead or Boun-Phi-Tai.

•782 Animal sacrifices are made to the different genii, and are
769 accompanied by prayers in honor of the dead. The favor of each genie or "Phi" spirit is gained by sacrificing a particular animal, as a dog for the "Phi" of tigers, chickens and pigs for the "Phis" of the mountains, a goat for those which watch over the roads leading to watercourses, and buffalo and oxen, finally, for the "Phis" of the

village and those of ancestors. Prayers for the dead are said, and 782 ●
when they are over the head and feet of a goat, crude clay statuettes 769
representing two men, two buffalo and two oxen, and numeroux wax
candles are placed on a raft made of banana trees. The raft is
launched full into the current of a river while men collect on the
banks and fire salvos of shots and shoot off fireworks.

The musical instruments of the Thais are the "Kene" and [240] 534
a kind of clarinet with two tubes, reinforced by gongs and tom-toms.

Their songs are not at all noisy and are much more like mono- 538
tonous chants.

The Thais have a very characteristic game, and this is the game 524
of the "inexhaustible jar." A jar of rice beer is placed on the floor
of a house and five bamboo tubes stuck in it to serve as straws. Five 273
men take positions around the jar, and each of them puts a tube in
his mouth. Into each of the jars, and above a kind of porous stopper
made of pressed paddy husks, water is poured by means of an ox
horn with a hole in the end. At a given signal both men and women
begin to suck conscientiously while the contents of the ox horn are
poured into each jar three times in succession. The ones who empty
their jar first win, and the losers have to drink the contents of ten
horns of water poured over what is left of the beer in their jar.

The Thai beer does not have a bad taste, and its alcoholic
strength is equivalent to that of hard cider, which it closely resembles
in flavor. Although the additions of water decrease the beverage's
percentage of alcohol it nevertheless produces a slight intoxication,
due primarily to the speed with which it is sucked through the straw.
But the inebriety never degenerates into a quarrel, and provokes
nothing but laughter, songs and unadulterated merriment.

Who would believe that the Thais have the custom of throwing 527
"confetti"? Nothing is more true, however, for in the celebrations
at the end of harvest, which take place in December or January,
the merrymakers throw cotton seeds mixed with paddy, with husks,
and sometimes also with ashes.

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Years	Number of animals exported	Average purchase price in Laos	Sale price at outlet markets
		francs	francs
1898	103 Horses	50	112.50
1899	185 Horses	From 30 to 125	From 88.50 to 225
	14 Mares	From 30 to 75	From 40 to 95

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Finally, we recommend the introduction of donkeys into Laos, with a view toward producing mules by coupling the donkeys with Laotian mares. The mules of Yunnan, which are highly reputed, reach heights as great as 1.32 meters. Extremely sturdy, they can readily carry a net weight of ninety kilograms of merchandise, not counting the saddle and pack-saddle. It is obvious that much use might be made of these animals in Laos for all kinds of transport.

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Buffalo. Buffalo breeding is much in honor throughout all of Laos. It supplies the needs of agriculture and of food consumption, which [403] absorbs a large number of these animals, particularly young ones. Many of them, in fact, are sacrificed on the occasion of celebrations and various ceremonies, while others are used daily for food in some of the larger centers.

It may truly be said that buffalo are raised everywhere, and since this animal is extremely hardy it can always find enough to eat, even in the forests.

The administration is encouraging the raising of buffalo in a most effective way, and since our arrival in Laos the work has grown by such proportions that exports of buffalo to nearby regions has assumed genuine importance. (4,721 head in 1898 and 3,144 in 1899.) When we entered into possession of Laos, however, the land had been largely depopulated of its animals. They had been removed by the Siamese, and it is nothing short of miraculous that the herds have been restored in so short a time despite the considerable losses caused by periodic outbreaks of epizootic disease, often extremely violent.

These favorable results have been achieved thanks to the wise foresight of the higher authorities, who prohibited all exports and imports as long as the bovine plague lasted.

796 It is not necessary to delay here over the licentious scenes, the songs
831 with words defying decency, the action of special marionettes, all
781 the allusions to the relationship between men and women intended to stimulate the fertility of the earth by sympathetic magic, all of which are well-known rites from classic antiquity up to ancient China. We will refer the reader to the authoritative study on the cycle of The Golden Bough by Sir James Frazer.

796 But what is the exact origin of this feast? Some claim that it is peculiar to Vientiane and has been celebrated in other towns of Laos only within the last twenty years. This comment is of capital interest. For, after the pillaging of Vientiane in 1827 by the Siamese General Phya Bodin, the majority of the population of Vientiane was deported to the right bank of the Mekong. Gradually the town was re-peopled by people coming from Tran-Ninh. Now it is a curious fact that on all the rocket shafts there is a strange decorative design whic is similar to those seen on bracelets and necklaces in the region of Xieng Khouang. Some [40] reliable authors having put out the hypothesis that the designs on these necklaces were the survival of an ancient solar cult, should one conclude that the rockets are the last misunderstood vestiges of an ancient fire worship, formerly practised by the populations of Tran Ninh? But then, at what time and under the influence of what rite, did this fire worship become transformed into a ceremony to obtain rain? The question remains open and perhaps future research and discoveries will give an explanation of this feast which is one of the most original and least known of Laos.

The Sacrifice of the Buffalo.

796 The sacrifice of the buffalo takes place at about the same time
● 782 as the feast of the rockets. This ceremony is known to all the Indonesian people of southeastern Asia, and its survival in Laos is of the greatest interest in the study of the antecedents of this country.

This ceremony is spread out through the months of May and June when the rainy season begins. It is found in western Laos where, according to a Pali chronicle, a Laotian king of Xieng Mai, who had no faith, adored demons and sacrificed buffaloes to the genii of the woods, the trees, the mountains, etc....

At Vientiane, near the Jules Bosc Avenue, can be seen a large stone which the Laotians worship as being a grain of rice. The buffalo is killed near this stone. A Nang Thyem woman, "inspired or possessed, after a series of invocations and ritual dances, pours water from a teapot onto the [redacted], while the by-standers flood the same stone with

[touques].

The experts throw themselves on the stone, turning it over to see if its underside has been wetted. According to the arrangement of the dry spots, [41] deductions are drawn on the topography of the rice fields which will be flooded, or remain dry, and on the advantage of making rice fields either "high or low."

This sacrifice of the buffalo is found in the myth of Gavampati the strange monk held aloof by the Buddhist community because he took the attitude of being an enemy of the waters. His death allowed the arrival of the rains.

Khao Vassa (Feast of the Eighth Month).

This is the date of the beginning of the Buddhist Lent. During the three months of rains, not being able to go from one place to another preaching, the Buddha and his community retired into the park of the Jetavana. Besides the season of rains, as it awakens life everywhere, causes animals to swarm in great numbers. It is therefore impossible at this time of year to travel without violating, at each step, the precept which forbids the destruction of all existence, however infinitely small it may be. Thus, during this period, the bonzes may not leave the pagoda and are obliged to be present at the general confession.

Oldenberg describes this confession according to the Pali texts as follows:

"No monk may miss it. Only he who is stricken with mental alienation may be dispensed....By the light of a torch, the monks take their places at the place of assembly on low stools which have been prepared for them. Neither laymen nor student bonzes [bonzillons] nor nuns may be present, for the rule of the Order, to be recited in the form of a formula of confession, is considered in principle as a secret appurtenance of the monks only. This formula of confession, the Patimokkgam, is recited aloud by the oldest member [doyen].

"Oh Reverend one, whoever has committed a sin, may he confess it.... After the third time that the question has been repeated, if a monk does not confess a sin which [42] he has committed and which he remembers, he is guilty of an intentional lie. Now an intentional lie, oh reverend one, is an obstacle to religious life. Such are the words of the Blessed One."

Then there follows a list of the sins which must be confessed. At the head of the list are the most serious ones:

775 According to the normal cycle of rebirths, when they have ended their stay in Heaven and are on the point of returning to earth, they themselves choose their future parents.

All the thirty-two souls go and haunt the water jar of the adopted household. After the third night, at the moment when the future father comes for a drink, they insinuate themselves into the folds of the belt of his sarong. After remaining there for three nights they will enter the maternal womb by the natural passages at the time of conjugal intercourse.

755 When one of these wandering souls leaves the body in order to divert himself, the man becomes ill. In order to [49] cure him, the ●782 soul must be called back, and then the Sou Khouan is performed.

When the Sou Khouan is considered necessary, the master of the house goes and consults an achar (pronounced: atiar =nk. acarya), an aged bonze, for the choice of the ceremonial days and hours, where this achar will officiate.

When the prescribed moment arrives, the pha khouan (tray containing offerings) must be ready. In the center of the tray is a goblet artistically decorated with small flowering branches on which are attached tiny candles and white cotton threads about twenty centimeters long. Around this goblet are arranged a boiled hen's egg called khay khouan (egg offered to the spirits), some pellets of glutinous rice, cakes, and ripe bananas.

The tray and goblet may be of wood, copper or silver, the richest appearing at weddings. Instead of a single goblet, several of different sizes can be placed one on top of the other to form a pyramid, and be decorated with flowers, candles and cotton threads.

In addition to the eatables already mentioned, one can also place on the tray a ngeun fac (ancient silver coin in the shape of a parallelepiped weighing 225 grams) or some other precious object.

Next to this tray is placed a small one on which is set a yellow-clawed cock which has been plucked, drawn and boiled. This is the khay khouan (the cock offered to souls). In addition one can add the head and viscera of a boiled pig.

[273] The whole is completed with a bottle of [rice] alcohol and some glasses. In the olden days, the alcohol was contained in a small natural gourd, and the cups [50] were made of bamboo or wood. But rich people had porcelain utensils imported from China. The alcohol can be replaced by a jar of fermented glutinous rice, the liquid extract of which is drunk by sucking it through bamboo tubes dipped into the bottom of the jar.

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The person whose absent spirits are to be recalled sits next to the pha khouan, on the other side of which is the achar master of ceremonies facing him.

In the case of a wedding, the bride and bridegroom each sits in front of his and her own pha khouan and achar, the young man being on the right of his affianced. [585]

Those present, consisting of aged persons, notables, relatives, friends and acquaintances, sit around mostly behind the interested parties.

While the candles are lighted, the achar commences to recite the prayer.

After the litanies are ended, the oldest and most respected of the assembly begins a series of the phouk khene (fixing a thread to the wrist) starting with the achar. The latter extends his forearm horizontally, either his right or his left, bent at right angles and held near the elbow by the hand of another person in the gathering. The opposite hand must be held in the attitude of prayer in front of the face as if it were joined to the hand on the other side. The man who will tie the knot then grasps the white cotton thread by the middle, so that the two halves hang down. These he draws over the wrist which is held in both directions of the axis of the arm, in order to sweep away the kho, that is, the misfortunes sent as a punishment for former sins. Then he detaches from the extremity of each thread a little piece which he throws towards the setting sun, thus throwing the kho afar. He then takes the khay khouan, a [51] pellet of rice, a banana, and finally one of the precious objects contained in the pha khouan. These he places in the extended open hand to serve as an offering to the khouan, and brings the small tray containing the khay khouan closer in such a way that the back of this hand is in contact with that of the chicken. Finally, after tying the thread around the wrist, he grasps the loops of the knot between the thumb and the forefinger, and rolls them together for about a second, giving him time to finish the formula of good wishes which he has been murmuring since the beginning while accomplishing the gestures described above.

The symbolical knot tied to the wrist serves to hold the khouan who have just been attracted to it, and prevents them from wandering away again. One can take advantage of the opportunity to "tie the wrist" of anyone present, either as a sign of friendship or of hommage. [576] At the close of the ceremony, which comes to an end without any more formalities, everyone is invited to a meal offered for the occasion.

The Bassi

782 This is the noble form of the Sou Khouan. It is not necessary to choose a day or a moment for its celebration. The Bassi greets the passing traveler to wish him welcome or a good journey on his departure. This is the typical Laotian ceremony.

Birth

843 Rites de passage. Van Gennep has defined under this name all the prohibitions and ceremonies which the pregnant woman, and one who has given birth, must observe in order to protect herself and her child from harmful influences. In Laos these prohibitions are strictly observed.

During Pregnancy. The woman must follow a certain number of observances in order to avoid the death of the [52] fetus. She must not eat partially hatched eggs, nor larvae of bees for she would make the child wicked like insects. She must not drink hot drinks for the child would be bald, etc. She must not step over a hollow oven for the child would have a harelip, nor over a horse's tether for the child would be a glutton; she must not paint her face for she would make the child frivolous, etc.

Before Delivery. These practices become stricter before her confinement, and others are added to them. The woman about to give birth must not eat round, hard-skinned eggplants, nor sugar cane, for the water bag would break with difficulty. The disorders of taste are due to the desires of the fetus, so these must be satisfied unless the desired dishes are forbidden. She must wear her skirt in such a way that the belt is always at the same height, for otherwise the child would not present itself well. She must not stand in the opening of a doorway, nor sit on a mortar for pounding rice, nor eat rice directly from the pot, for the progression of the fetus would be hindered at the time of birth.

There are also other beliefs. Wearing red garments would bring on hemorrhages, lying on one's back would risk making the placenta adhere, and it would become loose at the time of delivery only with great difficulty. Finally, to visit a woman in childbed might bring on a miscarriage, for the fetus might get the fancy to escape too soon.

When she awakes, the pregnant woman must strike her loins three times with her closed fists wishing at the same time that the placenta detach itself, and that the water bag break easily. In the evening, at the time of her daily bath, she should rub her belly with sand as she faces the setting sun in order to remove the layer of

173: Deydier--38 H, B-3 (no date) 1952 AM1 Indochina
(ca. 1940) Laotians AM8

Marriage

In Laos one gets married in the even months. The favorite month is the sixth, that of the feast of rockets, and the last one possible, because in the eighth month the sons-in-law do not dare to interrupt the work in the fields and after that until the twelfth month the Buddhist Lent must be observed. 585 805

[56] **The Marriage Proposal.** Laotian tradition requires a previous request, and the obligatory giving of the Kha Khun Phi, tribute paid to the guardian genii, also the optional gift of the Kha Dong, the dowery which is given by the husband to the bride or to her parents. [782] 584

The boy's mother, accompanied by one or two aged female relatives, goes to the home of the young girl, and in the course of conversing asks if the girl is of age to be married. The mother is free to answer that her daughter is too young or that no young man loves her, and that she runs the risk of remaining an old maid. In this last event the answer is an acceptance. Then during further visits material questions are settled. Up until the day of marriage the two affianced ones do not exchange a single word, and besides it is not necessary for them to know each other. However, as the Laotian villages are not very big, it is probable that the young people have had the opportunity to meet several times at the boun.

The official request takes place the day before the wedding and on the evening of this day, after dinner, the young man goes to the home of his future bride and with her attends the prayer of the bonzes who bless the water contained in begging bowls. A white cotton cord links together the bonzes, the begging bowls and the two betrothed. The blessed water is kept throughout the night. The next day at the earliest hour the same bonzes, the relatives and friends come and sprinkle the two young people generously with this water. When they have dried themselves and changed their clothes, they make their morning offering to the bonzes who bless them once more. 788 584

The Sou Khouan. This is properly called the marriage ceremony. The days and hours for the ceremony are determined by the aged hora (astrologists or soothsayers) after a minute study of the horoscopes of each one. This ceremony takes place in the home of the young girl. After a [57] family Sou Khouan celebrated at his home, the husband returns to his betrothed accompanied by two comrades who protect him with two parasols and followed by a procession of bearers. 585 [787]

May, and Vat Visun to render homage to the protecting genii of the village and chase away the evil spirits. 527

During three days the Laotians do no cooking. Fish, turtles, birds, etc., are bought in the big market and then set free as a sign of penitence and redemption of sins committed either voluntarily or not against living beings during the past year. 782

Possibly there is here a survival of the origin of the cycle of animals. According to Finot, at a very remote period, the custom of curing sick children by letting an animal go free had arisen. When a child was saved in this manner, he was said to have been born from this animal because he owed it life. He was forbidden to kill it, and the year of the child's birth was given the same [65] name as the animal. It is thus that the cycle of twelve years was established. 825 771

In the dry beds of the Mekong and of the Nam Khan, small that made of sand are built. Each one wishes the other a long life, whose number of years will equal the number of grains of sand forming the that, and great prosperity, for ill-luck has fled with the last day of the past year, and the New Year should bring as many riches as there are grains of sand in the that. Often around the principal that, other much smaller ones are erected, their number corresponding to the age of the builder. They express the wish of the one who has built them that he will see many more years added to those he has already lived. Actually these little that around the central mound are a reproduction of Mount Merou surrounded by different worlds (Cf. the symbolism of the That Luang). 521 805

In the pagodas the statues of Buddha are taken down from the altars and placed in little wooden prasat. They are sprinkled with perfumed water which flows in the hang-lin (a kind of gutter of gilded wood whose extremities represent the head of an aquatic monster), for the year now ending must be completely exhausted, and a minute cleansing, both material and spiritual, must leave a strictly clear way for the New Year. In the streets the young girls sprinkle not only the bonzes whom they honor, but all the young men, to compensate for all the minor vexations they have endured from the men during the past year. The high dignitaries are not exempt from these showers of more or less clean water. Sometimes their faces are rubbed with lampblack or mud, when they have the ill luck of meeting a group of young girls. Do we have a survival of the theme of the svayamvara here (free choice of the man by the young girl)? [562]

[66] The day in between, the day before New Year's day, is one of complete rest. All the events which occur during this day will determine

226 village. At the foot of the tree which is supposed to contain the
[182] dwelling of the genie, there is an altar about two meters high. Here,
the Chao Muong, surrounded by all the fishermen, places five roasted
527 chickens, two bottles of [73] rice alcohol, six coconuts, some betel
leaves, some areca nuts, some cakes, some small sticks of incense,
some beeswax candles. These he offers to the genie, asking him to
intervene in his favor so that the fishing this year be fruitful.

787 The genie is addressed by the intermediary of one of the village
527 sorceresses. As soon as she is "possessed" by the genie, she goes into
226 a trance. She is then unconscious of what is happening around her
and the genie answers through her mouth to the questions asked of her
by the fishermen. Invariably the genie's answer is the same: the
catch will be fruitful if traditions peculiar to the fishing of the pa beuk
are followed. The possessed woman, surrounded by a circle of fisher-
men, is at first standing up and is holding a cup in which are flowers,
[272] small sticks of incense, and ten beeswax candles. Her hands begin to
tremble when the genie enters into her; she then sets the cup down at
her feet, and, on top of her own clothes, puts on those of the fishermen
who present her with them on a tray for the sacrifice: an ordinary
sin, a cotton shirt dyed red, a belt and a turban also of cotton dyed
red to which are added a metallic plaster, and two yards [brasse]
of white cotton cloth for her personal use. After turning all around,
she squats down, her bust moving in a gyrating motion, and from
this moment she speaks in the name of the genie.

On the 10th day of the crescent moon the Chao Muong and the
preachers arrive at Kao Lieu, "the nine windings" of the Mekong,
where there is a very famous genie who is much more powerful than
that of Ban Si Khay. Forming a large procession, they fetch the
village sorceress with parasols, lances, swords and gongs. Piled high
on an offering tray are nine bars of silver, two kilograms of beeswax,
ten candles, four coconuts, some betel leaves, some areca nuts,
[74] a metal plaster, two yards [brasse] of white cloth, a raw hen's
egg, a bottle of rice alcohol. The procession returns with the sorcer-
ess to the front of the altars which are regular houses, and everyone
settles down in them. The entrance is to the west, that is, opposite
[78] the town. The offerings for the genie are four times greater than at
Ban Si Khay as each altar receives nine roast chickens, nine bars of
silver, four coconuts, some areca, some betel, candles, small
sticks of incense. In addition, every three years, a buffalo is sacri-
ficed, and in the years between, a pig. There are the same questions
and the same answers as at Ban Si Khay.

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In the night of the 11th to 12th day of the crescent moon, the stop is at Hat Hin Siou where some offerings are made to the local genie: two coconuts, two chickens, etc., with the request that he be favorable to the fishing. There are two more stops before arriving at Ang which must be reached on the 12th day of the crescent moon, at eight o'clock in the morning. In the evening all the fishermen go to the village to question the sorceress. There is no procession, but the same gifts as at Ban Si Khay; same questions, same answers. On the 13th day, at seven in the morning, they go to the altar of the genie with offerings to invite him to come and live in the temporary shelter which has been erected on the sandbank at Ang, north of the village, and to beg him to favor the fishing. The whole procession then goes toward the temporary altar and deposits its offerings.

On the 13th day of the crescent moon, the fishing starts at the precise moment when the moon disappears behind the mountain, that is at about four o'clock in the morning.

The gong is struck and immediately the 384 fishing dugouts go into the harbor. Each dugout is decorated with leafy branches, with seven untwisted cotton threads and with a bottle of rice alcohol, and is occupied by two fishermen. They throw a net measuring three meters in width and six meters in length which sinks down to a depth of [75] 35 brasses [70 meters] by means of lead sinkers. The first fish caught is offered to the genie. It is laid gently on its side, its head turned towards the rising sun, its tail lifted towards the setting sun. Some flowers are laid on its cheek and sprinkled with alcohol, while the master of ceremonies says: "The moment of celebrating the feast of Ang, which is your feast, has arrived. The ritual offerings have been made to you. To bring this feast to a happy close we beg you to give the fishermen pa beuk in great quantities."

The fish is then killed with a pointed bamboo which is sunk between the fish's eyes. It is then divided in two. The prepared liver is offered to the genie after it has been fixed in various ways according to ritual recipes, while candles and small sticks of incense decorate the nine offering trays each of which bears the bowl of food.